

## Community resources

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## Viewing cable 09SANAA2052, SA'ADA SOLUTION REQUIRES MORE THOUGHT, FEWER

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09SANAA2052**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09SANAA2052</a>	<a href="#">2009-11-11 09:00</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">SECRET//NOFORN</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Sanaa</a>

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INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	PERC-00	PDI-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	FBIE-00	VCIE-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00	M-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00
	NIMA-00	MCC-00	SCT-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	NCTC-00	CBP-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00
	SAS-00	FA-00	GSWA-00	SWCI-00	SANA-00	/000W	

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3189  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY

S E C R E T SANAA 002052

NOFORN

FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD AND INR JAPHE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: SA'ADA SOLUTION REQUIRES MORE THOUGHT, FEWER  
WEAPONS

REF: A. RIYADH 1491

[B](#). RIYADH 1502

[C](#). TDX-315/075037-09

Classified By: AMBASSADOR STEPHEN SECHE FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d)

[1](#). (S/NF) SUMMARY. Ongoing, direct Saudi involvement in the Sa'ada war, which in and of itself risks expanding the regional and sectarian dimensions of the conflict, also seems to be encouraging other Sunni neighbors to provide material support to President Saleh's ill-conceived campaign to eradicate the Houthi rebellion through purely military means. The SAG itself apparently has agreed to provide USD 62M in weapons, ammunition and other supplies from its own stock to the ROYG, and to finance additional deals with third parties. We urge direct and immediate engagement with governments in Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and other regional capitals (Cairo and Amman come to mind) to convey clearly our view that their interest in promoting a stable and secure Yemen is being fundamentally undermined by the infusion of large amounts of weapons to the ROYG, a substantial quantity of which can be expected to be diverted into Yemen's bustling grey arms market and from there to points unknown. As important, the message sent to Saleh through the provision of large amounts of money and military assistance is that his neighbors endorse his expressed intention to eliminate the Houthi rebellion through purely military means, an effort that already has resulted in enormous damage to the infrastructure and civilian population of Sa'ada governorate with no end to the war in sight. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (S/NF) The initiation one week ago of Saudi air strikes against Houthi fighters who attacked Saudi security forces from positions on the border-straddling Jebel (Mount) Dukhan opened a new chapter in the five-year old conflict, one that Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh appears eager to ensure will be the last. "The war just started two days ago," he declared on November 7, alluding to the initiation of the Saudi airstrikes, adding that "the war will never stop, no matter how much money or martyrs it costs." Since that time, despite public statements by SAG officials that the Saudi posture is purely defensive and that operations will cease once Houthi fighters are driven from its territory, open source and other reporting, including from Embassy Riyadh (RefA), indicates that Saudi air strikes have continued, and that the potential for the introduction of ground forces cannot be dismissed.

[3](#). (S/NF) Ref B, meanwhile, cites Saudi Arabia's National Guard (SANG) Asst Deputy Commander as telling A/S Shapiro in Riyadh that "the sooner that Yemen finishes the Houthi, the better it will be for them." This line of thinking, that the Houthi rebellion can be "finished" militarily is both dangerous and delusional. It ignores willfully the fact that, after five military iterations (2004-09) and three solid months of Yemeni air strikes (commencing August 12) and ground operations, well-armed and -entrenched Houthi forces continue to bedevil ROYG armed forces, which have suffered substantial losses, both from battlefield casualties and desertions. While the level of Houthi resilience, weapons proficiency and tactical expertise can and should force us to examine carefully claims of external support, the fact remains that the ROYG has failed repeatedly to corroborate its charges that the Houthi rebellion is the tip of the Iranian/Hizballah spear in Yemen. Most recently, the ROYG has failed to substantiate its extravagant, public claims that an Iranian ship seized in the Red Sea off its coast on Oct 25 was carrying Iranian military trainers, weapons and explosives destined for the Houthis. In fact, sensitive reporting (RefC) suggests that the ship was carrying no

weapons at all.

¶4. (S/NF) It is, in fact, the amount of weapons the SAG and at least one other neighboring state, the UAE, seem intent on throwing at the Yemeni government that strikes us as a cause for serious concern. We know that the Saudis have agreed to provide the ROYG with APCs, weapons and ammunition and to assist in the purchase of helicopters for the YAF. In addition, we understand KSA is offering to purchase weapons and ammo from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and that the UAE has agreed to broker a similar deal with Bulgaria. We believe this tidal wave of arms into Yemen, a nation already awash in weapons, will encourage President Saleh to continue to reject any suggestion that he attempt to find a negotiated solution to his government's conflict with the Houthis, and prolong a clumsy military effort that has destroyed much of Sa'ada's infrastructure and created an IDP population in excess of 150,000 people with no evidence that he is any closer to dominating the Houthis than he was five years ago. In addition, it is almost certain that a large amount of the weapons now on offer will find their way into Yemen's thriving grey arms market, or be re-exported, a traditional revenue stream for the Saleh government. From there, it is anyone's guess as to where the weapons will surface, potentially even in the hands of extremist groups bent on attacking Western interests in Yemen - and ironically, Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries in the Gulf.

¶5. (S/NF). Comment. We can all agree that the Houthis are a destabilizing element in Yemen, and that the ROYG has a responsibility to defend its national territory against armed insurgents. How the ROYG chooses to do so is a reasonable subject for discussion, however. Furthermore, whether the Houthis are (as the ROYG and its Sunni neighbors claim) the instrument Iran has chosen to establish a beachhead in the Arabian Peninsula remains unclear, although the fact that after five years of conflict there is still no compelling evidence of that link must force us to view this claim with some skepticism. That said, we can think of few ways to more effectively encourage Iranian meddling in the Houthi rebellion than to have all of Yemen's Sunni neighbors line up to finance and outfit Ali Abdullah Saleh's self-described "Operation Scorched Earth" against his country's Shia minority. We urge the Department to engage in Washington and in relevant capitals to convey to these "friends of Yemen" that they are undermining their goal of a stable and secure Yemen by providing large amounts of money and military assistance to President Saleh. Not only will this infusion of weapons contribute to Yemen's internal instability, but it will send a message to Saleh that his neighbors endorse his preferred method of conflict resolution: armed force. While there are moments when force must be employed, it cannot be to the exclusion of other means that might spare Yemen's already neglected population further suffering and deprivation. End Comment.

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